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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SOFIA 001330

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [XF](#) [AF](#) [IS](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [LY](#) [BU](#)

SUBJECT: BULGARIA: DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ON HAMAS, SYRIA,
LEBANON, IRAQ, LIBYA AND AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. STATE 151189

[1](#)B. STATE 148157

[1](#)C. STATE 150032

[1](#)D. STATE 150777

[1](#)E. SOFIA 1316

[1](#)F. EMB BAGHDAD E-MAIL 9/13/06

[1](#)G. SOFIA 1230

Classified By: A/DCM Brad Freden, reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. In response to Bulgaria's plans to open a diplomatic office in Ramallah following the formation of a "national unity" government in the Palestinian territories, Charge' cautioned deputy Foreign Minister Faim Chaushev, stressing the steps Hamas would have to take in order to legitimize itself in the eyes of the international community (ref A). He urged the GOB to quickly make good on its pledges of assistance to Lebanon and UNIFIL (ref B), laid down a marker on Syria (ref C), and strongly reiterated the U.S. position regarding Iran's refusal to comply with UNSCR 1696 (refs D and E). Charge' informed Chaushev that the Iraqi government had approved the site requested by Bulgaria for its embassy in the Green Zone (ref F), and urged him to establish a permanent diplomatic presence in Baghdad. Chaushev responded positively in principle on all counts, and added that Bulgaria was considering NATO's need for additional troops in Afghanistan. He thanked the U.S. for the active role it is playing in trying to obtain the release of the five Bulgarian nurses imprisoned in Libya (ref G).
END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Charge' held a wide-ranging discussion of Middle East issues with deputy Foreign Minister Faim Chaushev on September 15. Chaushev's deputy, MFA Middle East director Petko Doykov, told us the previous day that Bulgaria planned to restart discussions with the Palestinians regarding the opening of a diplomatic office in Ramallah once Hamas and President Abbas agreed on a "national unity government recognized by the international community." Charge' urged Chaushev to move slowly, noting that recognition by the international community would require Hamas to accept the Quartet principles, including renouncing terrorism and recognizing Israel's right to exist.

[1](#)3. (C) Charge' outlined our concerns regarding Syrian behavior and the principles guiding our policy, stressing in particular Syria's obligations under UNSCR 1701. Chaushev said that Syria and Iran "had not learned the lesson of Libya," which had given up its WMD program and embarked on a path of closer relations with the West. Both countries would

try to maintain their influence in Lebanon through Hezbollah.

Unfortunately UNIFIL would not be able to stop the flow of arms across the Syrian border. Chaushev reaffirmed his government's commitment to providing either a naval frigate or a military medical unit to UNIFIL, depending on the needs of the force. He said he had spoken to Iranian officials and told them that the only way to dispel suspicions about their nuclear program was to open it up to the IAEA. "No openness equals no trust," was the message he reportedly gave the Iranians. Noting Omani, Kuwaiti and Egyptian fears of a nuclear-armed Iran, Chaushev said the West also needs to take better advantage of Arab government's private opposition to Iran's nuclear program.

14. (C) Chaushev asserted that the re-trial of the five Bulgarian nurses imprisoned in Libya since 1999 was developing "according to plan." He expects the court to hold its last hearing the week of September 18 and to announce its decision roughly three weeks later. His personal opinion is that the court will uphold the nurses' death sentences, but that the Libyan government will then quickly find a way to send them back to Bulgaria (ref G). Nevertheless, the period between the announcement of a verdict and the return of the nurses would be a tense one, especially in light of the October 22 presidential election in Bulgaria. Chaushev thanked the U.S. for its consistent support of the nurses, saying that "Libya only listens to the U.S."

15. (C) On Iraq, Chaushev greeted as good news the decision by the Iraqi government to approve the site requested for the Bulgarian embassy. The next step would be for Ambassador Valeri Ratchev to return to Baghdad to negotiate the details. Chaushev sounded a note of caution, however, saying that "we

SOFIA 00001330 002 OF 002

need to ensure first and foremost the security of our personnel." Commenting on his August visit to Kabul, Chaushev noted the lack of security for ordinary Afghans. Citing the ability of the Taliban and Al Qaida to earn money from narcotics trafficking, Chaushev asserted the security situation in Afghanistan was "worse than Iraq." He told us he recommended to the Bulgarian Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs that Bulgaria respond positively to NATO's request for more forces.

16. (C) Chaushev by saying that it was important to have "a more active dialogue between civilizations" in the Middle East. Bulgaria, because of its traditionally good relations with Arab governments and the trust it enjoys with Israel, is well placed among European countries to promote such a dialogue. He thanked the Charge' for sharing U.S. views and said Bulgaria would continue to coordinate its position with the U.S.

KARAGIANNIS